Phulan Rani.

Guru Gobind Singh

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Guru Gobind Singh

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Give me this, my Lord!

That nothing should restrain
Me from upholding Right;
And when I go to fight
The foe, no thought remain
Of fear or fright in me
But firm faith in victory.

This only I desire
That all my earthly days
Be blessed with Thy praise;
And when 'tis hour to retire
On the field of battle I
Should fighting nobly die.

—Gobind Singh

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Birth and childhood

At the time when Sikhism was born, India was in ruins, both politically and socially. The character of the people had sunk very low, so low indeed that they could hardly distinguish between the life of slavery and that of self-respect. Many evils had crept into the religious and social life of the Hindus. The Sikh Gurus were determined to save it from disaster. So they took it on themselves to reform it, infuse new blood in it and thus give it a fresh lease of life.

Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur laid down their lives just to show that human dignity was the most valued possession of man and that it must be maintained at all costs.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was the youngest son of Guru Hargobind, the Sixth Guru. He was a saintly person and he spent the early years of his life in the seclusion of an underground cellar, meditating on the eternal problems of life and death. On the demise of the Eighth Guru, Shri Harkrishan, Gurudom passed on to him. So the call of duty forced him out of his obscure retreat.

But the path that lay before him was not the path strewn with roses. It was the thorny path of honour. He had to face dual opposition. On one side was the over-bearing attitude of the Mughal rulers and on the other was the jealousy of his near relations. Being essentially a man of peace and goodwill, he chose to move away from this seat of intrigue and jealousy. He retired to the silent solitudes of the Shivalik hills and there he founded a city which he called Anandpur, meaning the City of Bliss. But the envy of his kith and kin pursued him even there. Thus, partly to shake himself free of these irksome intrigues and partly with a desire to spread the message of Sikhism beyond the confines of the Panjab, he decided to set out on a long journey to the East.

During his travels he reached the ancient city of Patna. He stayed there for some time. Then, leaving his family behind, he moved on towards Assam. While he was away, Gobind Rai was born at Patna in 1666. There were great rejoicings at his birth. Hearing this happy news, the Guru returned to Patna and, halting there for some time, he moved back to the Punjab to attend to the great tasks that awaited him there. Soon after he summoned back his family also.

From his very boyhood Gobind Rai was inclined towards the life of chivalry and honour. He never knew what fear was. His familiar pastime was to divide his young companions into opposing armies and wage mock battles in the streets of Patna.

Once when the Nawab of Patna was passing through the streets of the city, his attendants commanded Govind, who was leading a band of street urchins, to salute him. But it were love's dictates, and not of authority, that the Guru was wont to obey. So he told his companions to show their cheek, rather than their respects, to the haughty lord. The boys did like-wise and hastily retreated from the scene, leaving the Nawab and his officers gnashing their teeth at the blatant insult.

Govind loved weapons of curious workmanship. This love grew with years. He loved bow above all other weapons and he was never seen without it.

A spacious courtyard was attached to the house where Govind lived. It had a well of sweet water in it. It attracted womenfolk from the neighbourhood, intent upon drawing water for household needs. The place hummed with activity throughout the day. Govind's flair for fun found a novel expression. He would sit in a secure corner and make the earthen pitchers targets of his pellets. The unhappy women protested to his mother who silenced them by paying off handsome amounts. At the same time she would warn the young Govind against repetition of this mischief. But it was too tempting a fun for the child Govind to resist. When his mother saw that the number of complaints was growing to an alarming proportion, out of sheer desperation she said, "This well is the root of all mischief ! Let its water turn saline !" The change immediately occured. This well exists even now and its water tastes saltish.

In those days there lived in Patna one Pandit Shiv Datt, a dovotee of Lord Krishna. He was esteemed by the people as a holy man. But his mind was not at peace with himself. He thought that either there was something wrong with him or his method of worship, for peace, the fruit of devotion, ever eluded him.

Once Govind was busy playing with his mates on the banks of the Ganges. He found Shiv Datt, with his eyes closed, lost in meditation. He went tiptoe upto him and shouted aloud into his ear, "Open your eyes, O Pandit !" Shiv Datt was startled. With a tremour he felt that the Great Beloved in whose quest he had been all his life, had at last come to take his seat in the temple of his heart. He opened his eyes and saw the lotus-like face of the child Govind and he was blessed. He became Govind's life-long disciple.

The aging Raja Fateh Singh of Benaras was issueless. In the quest for a son he had met many holy men and had undergone many penances, but all this to no avail. He heard about Pandit Shiv Datt also and went to him to invoke his blessings. The Pandit said to him, "What can a beggar like myself give you ? Go and beg of Govind Rai, the Divine Child. Yearn for him ! Long for him ! And he will bless you."

Raja and his wife went home and began to meditate on the Divine Child. Days passed on, but there was yet no sign of him.

At last, one day, when the Raja's wife was sitting with her eyes closed, she felt tiny little hands enclose her from behind in a sweet embrace. And, then, a child, with his face bright like the morning, came and sat down in her lap and said with a smile, "Mother, open thine eyes, for I have come."

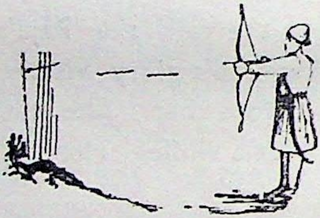
Obedient to the call, the Raja's wife opened her eyes and saw God's glory visibly expressed in the child form before her. She sat entranced at the lovely sight for a while. Her desire for a son was fulfilled.

The child Govind said to her, "Mother, give me something to eat, for I am hungry."

The Raja's wife was happy beyond measure. She placed before him rich delicacies and Govind took them to his fill. From thence onward Govind made it a daily practice to visit the Raja's wife along with his playmates and please her with his divine antics.

He planted many saplings in the Raja's garden. One of the trees planted by him survives to this day.

Gobind Rai was hardly five years of age at this time. But with his fun and frolic and sweet, captivating nature he had made himself beloved of all and sundry.



At Anandpur

It was one of these days that Guru Tegh Bahadur sent for his family to Anandpur. After hasty preparations, the family proceeded homewards. There were great rejoicings at the home-coming and the city was decorated and profusely lighted as a mark of welcome.

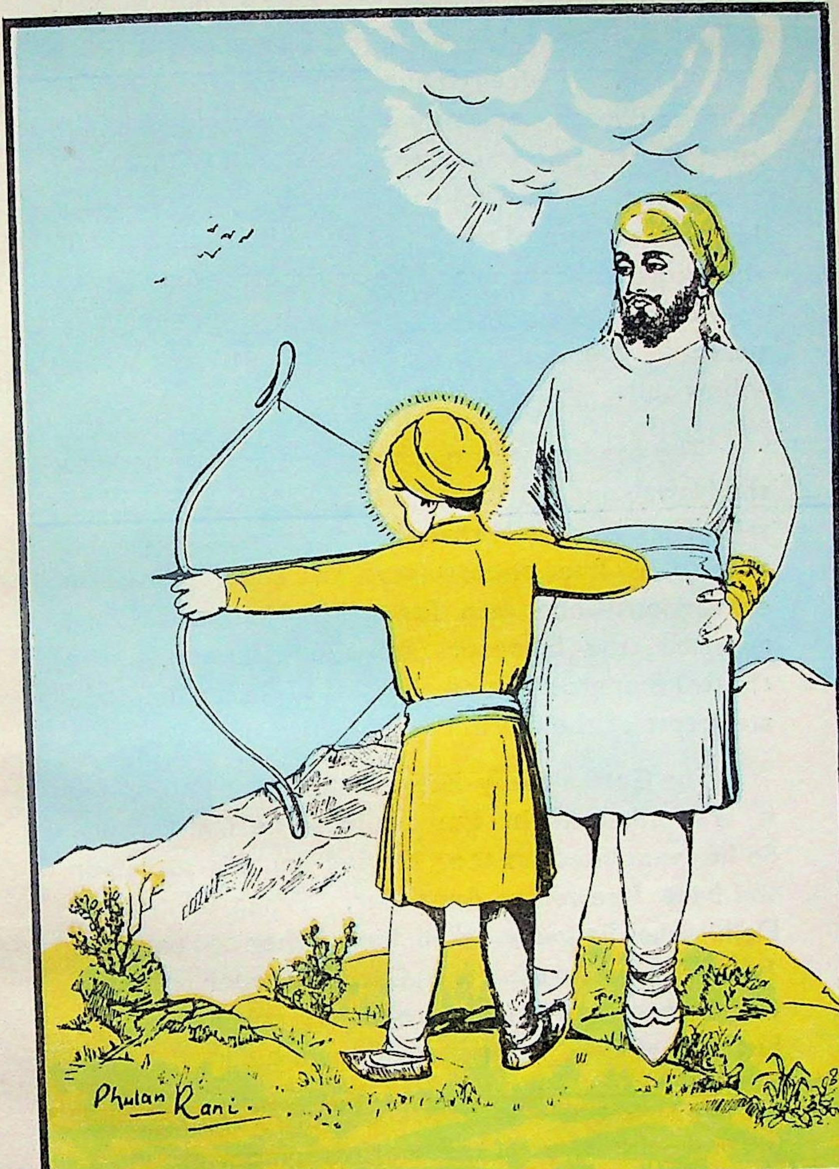
Guru Tegh Bahadur made adequate arrangements for his son Govind's general education, with a special stress on military training. The Guru knew that difficult times lay ahead and such a training would be necessary to grapple with the forces of evil that had, of late, raised their ugly head.

Govind soon acquired mastery over Gurmukhi, Sanskrit, Persian and the use of arms. He was indeed growing into a fine specimen of manhood.

Aurangzeb, the Mughal Emperor, had sent orders to his provincial governors to use all means at their command for the spread of Islam. The Governor of Kashmir, more inclined than others to win the good graces of the Emperor, decided on a career of forcible conversions. He openly enjoined on the Hindus of Kashmir either to embrace Islam or face severe persecution. The pandits knew not how to escape this sudden calamity. Someone among them suggested that the Ninth Guru of the Sikhs, who in these troublous times, was the sole solace of the suffering humanity, be approached for help. This suggestion met with general approval.

Thus a deputation of some leading Kashmiri pandits reached Anandpur and appealed to the Guru for immediate succour. Guru Tegh Bahadur gave them a patient hearing but at the same time realised that it was no petty task. It implied, on the one hand a sustained resistance to the oppressor and, on the other, rousing the conscience of the oppressed. It needed sacrifice of a great soul. But who was that great soul? That was the question of all questions.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was just pondering over this problem when Govind, who was hardly nine years of age then, came in hilarious from play. Finding his father in pensive deliberation, he enquired of him the reason there of. Guru Tegh Bahadur disclosed to him the thought that was troubling his mind. Govind at once said, "Who else is worthier than you for this noble sacrifice !"


Phulan Rani.

Young Govind being instructed in the use of arms.

These words, unexpected from a child of such tender age, revealed a gallant heart. The Guru felt elated. It strengthened him in his resolve to sacrifice himself for this noble cause. He was now confident that he was leaving behind no unworthy successor but one who would play his part gloriously in the scheme of things. Thus, his doubts about the future fully resolved, he advised the pandits to go back to the Nawab and tell him that if he could persuade the Guru to embrace Islam, they would follow suit.

The pandits, very much relieved, returned to the Nawab and conveyed to him what the Guru had said. The Nawab felt that this was a great challenge, as also a fine opportunity to effect wholesale conversions—one man for all! He immediately apprised the Emperor of the situation. The shrewd Emperor lost no time in ordering immediate arrest of the Guru.

The Guru already knew what was coming, for it was inherent in the challenge he had thrown. So he appointed his son, Govind Rai, his successor and bade farewell to Anandpur. When he reached Delhi, the Emperor asked him either to embrace Islam or face death. The Guru, in order to show that human spirit understood no other language but that of love, willingly laid down his life.

By this supreme sacrifice Guru Tegh Bahadur showed the way in the starless gloom around—the way to dignified life that lay across the Valley of

Shadow of Death. It was for Guru Govind now to lead his men on that noble way. Fear had so ignobly warped the souls of men that a greedy depredator like Mahmud Ghazni, with only a few hundred soldiers, could lay waste the length and breadth of India without meeting serious challenge from any quarter. He carried away women to be sold into slavery without even the feeblest protest from the wronged.

Mohammed Bin Qasim, a petty Arab general, could found a kingdom in Sind with the help of a few thousand soldiers.

To revive the sense of honour and self-respect among such people, accustomed from generations to an easy-going, cowardly existence, was nothing short of a miracle.

Guru Govind took up the gauntlet and eventually did perform the miracle !

When we read the wonderful story of his life, we are simply amazed at the resolute will, unexampled bravery and farsightedness with which he tackled this enormous task.

He dedicated every moment of his active and inspired life to this noble cause. He considered no sacrifice too great for it, and achieved a miracle without an example in the annals of world history. He infused a new life into the dead nation and taught it to live and die with dignity and grace.

To achieve this end, he applied his mind first of all to the creation of a heroic literature. He had realised early that a nation without such literature could not survive. Govind himself was a poet of great calibre, and he started writing heroic poetry. He gathered round him a large number of noted poets from all over the land and directed them to render into verse the epic exploits of ancient heroes, the mere recital of which could tingle the blood even of a coward! But when these epics were sung to the audience by the minstrels, they breathed into it a mood of deliberate valour and defiance of death.

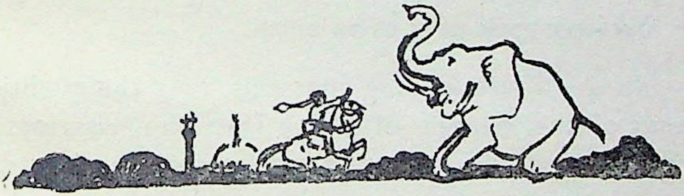
Side by side with this, he collected arms of every kind. Not only did he himself acquire mastery in their use, but also through regular exercise and drill, frequent hunting expeditions, tournaments and bouts, chiselled his men into finest soldiers.

Thus, in a very short time, Anandpur began to hum with activity. People began to flock to it from far and near. Arms and ammunition also began to pile up.

He began to receive costly presents from his devotees. A Sikh from far-off Kabul brought him a beautiful canopy carved curiously with intricate designs in gold and silver. Even the Emperor's canopy could not vie with it in beauty and workmanship.

Raja Rattan Rai of Assam, who was a true disciple of the Guru, sent him a rare elephant. The unusual thing about it was that its black skin was relieved by a beautiful streak of white from trunk to tail and it could perform feats of extraordinary intelligence. The Raja enjoined upon the Guru to keep these gifts strictly for his personal use.

The Raja was about the same age as Guru Govind. He joined him in his hunting expeditions and enjoyed many a sport in his gracious company. On the eve of Raja's return to his country, Govind, too, loaded him with costly gifts.



Preparations

It was Govind's daily routine to rise before dawn, wash himself and meditate on the great problems facing him. Then he went to the congregation hall where he listened to the holy songs sung to the accompaniment of music. Then, after recitations from the Holy Granth, he received visitors. Meanwhile the 'Langar' (common meal) would be ready and everyone - rich or poor, high or low - partook of it as an equal.

In the afternoon the minstrels sang the mighty deeds of the heroes of old. The Sikh warriors, then, regaled the gathering with wrestling bouts, Javelin throw, swordsmanship and other manly exercises.

In the evening hunting expeditions were organised, at the conclusion of which evening prayers were held. The congregation, then, partook of the common meal and returned to rest for the night.

Govind's army steadily grew in numbers. He made every effort to turn it into the finest fighting force. A big drum was needed for the purpose. General Nand Chand was detailed to construct it.

In those days only an independent chieftain was entitled to own and use such a drum and that, too, within the limits of his own territory. The beating of drum within the bounds of another chief's territory was a hostile act and meant an open invitation to war.

The city of Anandpur lay within the territory of Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspur - a vain and haughty chief. To beat the drum here was sure to land the Guru in trouble. So the faint hearts, who had gathered round the Guru just for fun or pastime, were terribly scared. They complained to the Guru's mother against such wilful acts of her son. She, too, was frightened and warned Govind against the unwisdom of needlessly provoking authority. To this Govind replied resolutely, "Mother, it is not for me either to fear or instil fear in others. But I deem it my duty to teach lesson to those who oppress. I cannot, for my life, forgo my duty at the cost of personal comfort. God is there to sustain me in this noble task."

Govind's determined attitude softened his mother's opposition. The real instigators of this disaffection remained outwardly unconcerned but inwardly kept murmuring.

At last the war-drum was ready. Govind named it "Ranjit Nagara" - the drum of victory. He celebrated its completion with a great display of enthusiasm. The sound of the drum could be heard over miles.

One day, during a hunting expedition organised by the Guru, the sound of the drum reached the ears of Raja Bhim Chand too, the lord of territories of which Anandpur formed a part. Naturally the Raja made anxious enquiries from one of his ministers as to the source of this warlike sound. The minister disclosed to him that this sound emanated from the war-drum of Govind Rai, the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs, a person of great spiritual powers and epitome of manly accomplishments. He advised the Raja to befriend the Guru, for his friendship was a great privilege. The Raja sent the same minister to arrange a meeting with the Guru. The Guru replied, "The doors of Guru's house are open to all. Those, who come with love and reverence, shall receive love and peace in return, and those who come with ill-will shall reap nothing but sorrow and suffering."

The emissary was pleased with this reply and he conveyed to the Raja his reactions. Thus, after making elaborate preparations, the Raja reached Anandpur. The lordly bearing of Govind and the radiant charm that emanated from his divine presence

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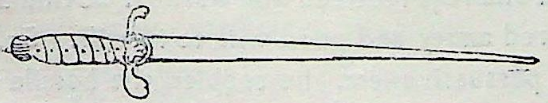
impressed him deeply But, the next morning, when he had an occasion to witness the royal splendour of the Guru's court, the wonderful feats of the elephant and the costly pavilion, his appreciation changed into envy. He made up his mind to get possession of these by force or guile.

Thus, immediately after return to his capital, the Raja sent for these two costly gifts on the pretext that these were required as show-pieces on the occasion of his son's marriage. Govind saw through the Raja's game. He replied, "Those who made me these presents required of me to keep them strictly for my personal use. I cannot go against their wishes. I have many other elephants, equally beautiful. You can have any one of these that pleases you most !"

The Raja took the Guru's refusal as a personal insult and was red with rage. He decided to make war on him to avenge this insult. He induced many other hill chiefs to join him. They all advised him, however, to postpone the war till after the marriage festivities were over, for it was likely to mar the happiness of the occasion.



The Battle of Bhangani

The hill chiefs of Nahan and Srinagar were bitter enemies. When the chief of Nahan learnt that the daughter of Raja Fateh Shah of Srinagar was engaged to be married to the son of Raja Bhim Chand, he was very much scared. This alliance, he thought, was bound to strengthen his enemy's hands against him. To counter this danger, he, too, was in search of a powerful ally. Someone advised him to seek alliance with Gobind Rai, the powerful Sikh Guru.

The Raja invited the Guru to his state. The latter accepted the invitation and, taking a strong detachment of armed soldiers with him, he reached Nahan. The Raja received him warmly. Govind always preferred amity and good-will to ill-will. So, with sweet persuasiveness, he enabled the hostile chiefs to patch up their differences. In gratitude for this help, the Raja pressed the Guru to remain in his state for sometime more.

The Guru selected a lovely spot on the banks of the Jamuna and built a fortress there. He called this fortress 'Garh Paonta'. The silence and solitude of the place and its unearthly beauty inspired Govind to compose some of his most beautiful and great poetry here.

The way to Srinagar passed through Paonta. Therefore the marriage party, headed by Raja Bhim Chand, feared a clash with the Guru. The Raja knew also that if, to avoid trouble, he chose to follow the other route, he would be late for the day appointed for marriage.

In order to tide over this difficulty, it was decided to approach the Guru with a request to let him pass through Paonta unmolested.

Govind replied, "If Bhim Chand means well, why need he bring such a strong force with him ? Alone he can pass unmolested, but if his army accompanies him, be sure that he will be challenged !"

The hill chiefs considered this reply a challenge to their self-respect. So they decided to follow the longer route although it entailed innumerable hardships, and sent the bridegroom alone through Paonta.

ABJEET
Kitchoo

The bridegroom, accompanied by a few attendants, went into Govind's presence and sought his permission to pass through Paonta. The Guru said, "I am only against hypocrisy and deceit. An honest person need fear no harm. You are free to pass." Govind bestowed on the prince a robe of honour and let him go his way.

Raja Fateh Shah, too, had invited Govind to his daughter's marriage. But the latter doubted the intentions of the hill chiefs. So, instead, he sent his general, Nand Chand, with costly presents to represent him at the ceremony.

The hill chiefs, worn and tired, and sore at the Guru's attitude, reached the journey's end many days after the bridegroom had arrived. They warned Raja Fateh Shah against accepting presents from Govind. They said, "The Guru is our enemy. He would not let us pass through the direct route. Your acceptance of his presents would strain our relations with you. You should rather join us in making war upon him."

Thinking that Govind's friendship was likely to cost him dear, Raja Fateh Shah joined this unholy alliance. Nand Chand was clever enough to sense this change of loyalty by Fateh Shah, He hastily collected all the presents and made good his escape before he could be effectively intercepted. He apprised Govind of the whole situation.

The escape of Nand Chand angered Bhim Chand all the more. He warned his friends that if Govind's growing power was not crushed soon enough, it would grow increasingly difficult for them to be masters in their own house. He persuaded all those present to attack Govind now when forces at his command were limited and victory was comparatively easier.

At a little distance from Paonta, there lived a Muslim fakir, Buddhu Shah by name. He was a friend of the Guru. Some five hundred Pathan soldiers, who had sometime back been discharged from the Imperial army, requested the Pir to get them employment somewhere. The Pir recommended them to the Guru. The latter gladly recruited them in his army.

Soon the news came that the hill chiefs were about to make war upon the Guru. The Pathans, on one pretext or other, deserted Govind and joined the enemy. They thought that the ill-equipped and untrained forces of the Guru would be no match for the regular and numerically superior forces of the hill chiefs and it was no fun to fight for the side doomed for certain. Therefore they paid no heed to Govind's protestations.

When Buddhu Shah came to know of this treacherous act of the Pathans, he felt deeply grieved. To make adequate amends, he sent his two young sons and a few hundred disciples to fight for Govind.

A few hundred Sadhus of the Udasi sect were also staying with Govind and were having a merry time there. The news of the impending battle put a sudden stop to their merry-making and they slipped away from there under cover of darkness. Only one of them, named Mahant Kirpal, chose to stay. When Govind learnt of this sneaking escapade, he smiled and said to the Mahant, "You alone among them all have upheld the honour of your sect!"

The news of the oncoming battle spread apace and hundreds of Sikhs from far and near hastened to swell the Guru's ranks.

The Guru has himself described this battle in his celebrated poem "Bachittar Natak".

Govind awaited the advancing enemy at Bhangani, about eight miles from Paonta. He occupied an eminence from where to deal destructive blows at the enemy.

As soon as the enemy was in sight, the Sikhs rushed upon it like an overwhelming tide. Govind shot his merciless arrows at the enemy and wrought confusion in its ranks. The hill chiefs had thought that the rag-tag recruited by Govind would melt into thin air merely at the sight of their formidable force. But it all happened otherwise. This rag-tag displayed such mettle that the enemy was forced to revise its opinion of it.

Lal Chand Mahi, who had been tending cattle all his life, and Lal Chand sweet-seller, who knew nothing beyond the requirements of his peaceable occupation, scoured the field in all directions unhindered and wrought havoc wherever they went. Mahant Kirpal crushed the very skull of the Pathan general, Hayat Khan, even with his cudgel !

The battle raged with unrestrained fury the whole day. Many hill chiefs and Pathans lost their lives. Unable at last to cope with the mounting fury of the Sikh onslaught, the hill chiefs left the field utterly beaten and broken. The Sikhs, too, lost many of their valiant heroes, among whom were generals, Sango Shah and Jit Mal, and both the sons of Buddhu Shah.

Govind offered prayers of thanks to the Almighty for this great victory.

Pir Buddhu Shah also came to congratulate Govind. When he learnt from the latter about the death of his two sons, instead of giving vent to his sorrow, he said, "Sire, I consider it a high honour that, instead of dying a common man's death, they have become martyrs in a great cause !"

Govind was overwhelmed with the Pir's devotion and he said, "You are a worthy father of worthy sons ! Great is your sacrifice indeed ! Tell me how I can repay you my debt of gratitude."

Govind had just come out of a hill stream after the morning dip and was combing his hair.

The Pir replied, "Dear Lord ! you have given me your love in ample measure. What else do I need ? But I shall consider no honour greater than to own as a souvenir this comb of yours along with the entangled hair !"

Govind offered him his comb, a token of his boundless love ! This comb is still in possession of the descendants of the Pir.

After this victory Govind returned to Anandpur. The hill chiets now realised rather too well that to deal with the Guru was not as easy as they had imagined. Their fury against him turned into frustration and they gave up the idea of measuring strength with the Guru for sometime more.

Birth of the Khalsa

Govind now devoted himself exclusively to the intellectual and physical betterment of the Sikhs. He desired that the Sikhs should not only be gallant in war but also learned in ancient lore. He wished them to be seekers of truth and wisdom.

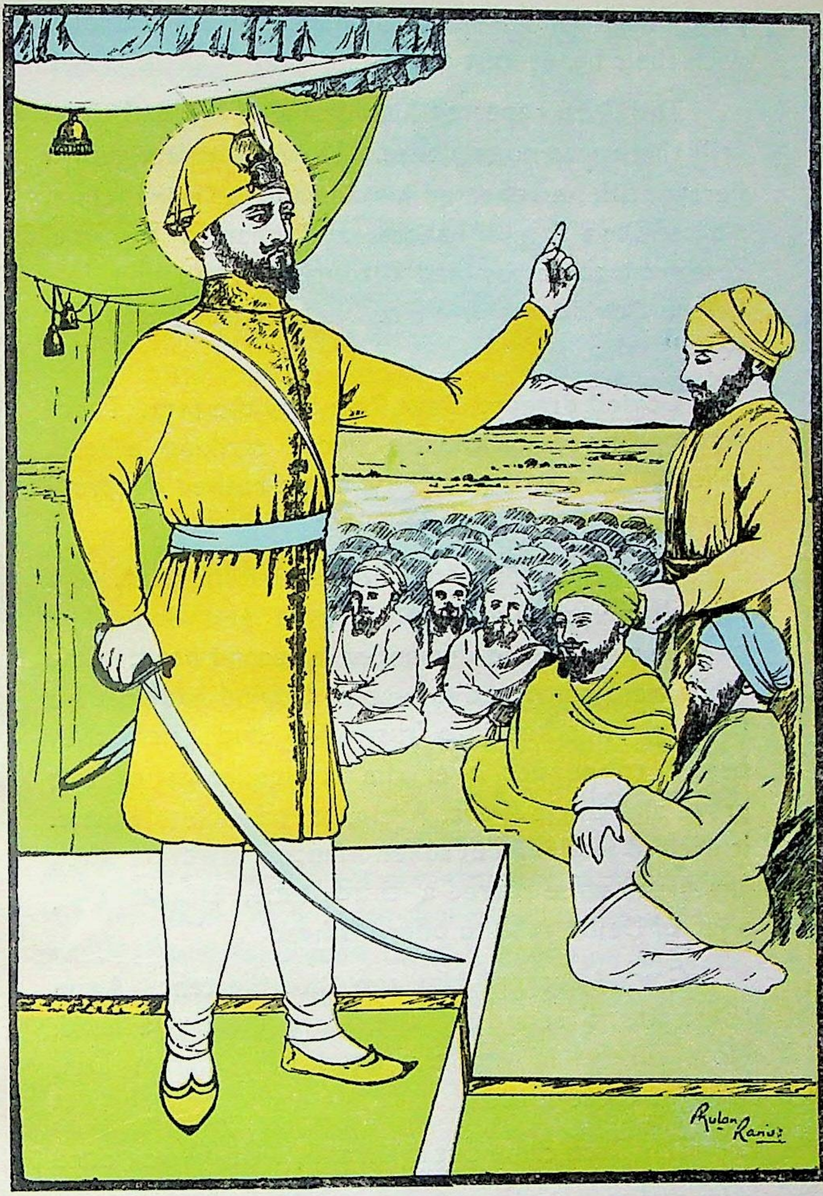
He sent many Sikhs to Benaras, the centre of learning in those days, to study ancient scriptures. To remove the distinctions of caste and creed from their midst, he enjoined on them to partake of the common meal. And, in order to teach them the value of self-respect, he sought to remove the fear of death from their mind.

The first step in this direction was his general directive to the Sikhs to keep long hair. Prior to this, there was nothing in outward form or demeanour to distinguish a Sikh from others and they could come to Anandpur without any check or hindrance. Now a Sikh could be clearly known by his long hair. Naturally, therefore, the Muslim rulers began to put all sorts of obstacles in their free movement. In order to overcome this difficulty, Govind issued a further directive to his followers to wear arms, and to wield them in self-defence or whenever otherwise required.

In the year 1699 A.D., on the occasion of Baisakhi, the Sikhs thronged to Anandpur in an unusually large number.

A day before, Govind held a great gathering on an eminence which he named Kesgarh. Close by the raised platform, from where to address the audience, he had a tent pitched. Immediately after the recital of morning prayer, Govind enacted a blood-curdling scene. He went into the tent and, after a short interval, came out completely transformed. With his eyes flashing fire, his face furrowed with fury and a drawn sword in hand, he roared with the voice of thunder, "My sword today is hungry for blood ! Is there anybody here ready to offer me his head ?"

This was indeed a bolt from the blue ! The Sikhs had come here to fill the gaping void in their souls by the sight of their serene-faced lord and not to offer their heads to the blood-thirsty god of death. They had never before seen their beloved Govind in this terrible aspect. Partly confused and



Birth of the Khalsa

partly frightened, they sat melancholy and morose, with their heads cast down.

The Guru repeated his demand a second time. Still there was no response. With an aspect grown fiercer still, he repeated his demand a third time. At last Daya Ram of Lahore, a Kushatrya by caste, rose from the assembled throng and, bowing low before Govind, said, "Sire, here is my head for you!"

Govind dragged Daya Ram into the tent. There was a grim sound of the sword striking a head, followed by a stream of blood that rushed out from the tent.

With the blood-drenched sword in hand, and himself a veritable image of death and doom, he came out again and demanded a second head. The Sikhs were convinced now that Govind had lost his balance. Shocked into frustration and grief, they began to ponder over the consequences of this grave and tragic event. Again he roared his demand. It elicited nothing but sullen silence. However, when the dread voice roared a third time, Dharam Das, a jat of Delhi, rose to offer his head.

Govind dragged him, too, into the tent. Again there was a sound of the sword striking a head. Most surely it was the head of Dharam Das, thought those present.

The Guru came out again and, with a voice once calm and re-assuring, now changed into the voice of threatening doom, he asked for still another head. The audience, now overawed and disgusted at this unquenchable appetite for heads, began to disperse. But on the third call a weaver from Dwarka, Mohkam Chand by name, rose from his seat to offer his head.

He, too, was dragged inside the tent and suffered the dread fate of his two predecessors.

Govind enacted this grisly horror twice more. This time Sahib Chand, a hair-cutter from Bidar, and Himmat Rai, a cook from Jagannath, stood up to offer their heads. After the fifth man was dragged into the tent, Govind stayed inside longer than usual. By this time the audience was utterly demoralised. It was convinced that the Guru was bent upon putting them all to sword and was now thinking over some quick device to realise his end.

But this time, when Govind came out, his sword was sheathed, his face was serene and radiant like the morning and his eyes shone with joy divine. The five Sikhs, who were believed to have been put to sword, followed him with the same aura of glory round their faces. They had offered Govind their heads, and he, in return, had given them his glory.

The audience came to know now that the Guru had tied five goats inside the tent and the fury of the sword had fallen on the heads of these goats rather than those of the Sikhs. This melodrama was enacted with the skill of a perfect artist. By this he immortalised the spirit of self-sacrifice which was to form the basis of the new edifice to be known as the Khalsa, meaning 'the pure'.

Now all those present were overtaken by remorse. They wished that they, too, had offered their heads and won everlasting grace of their dear Guru.

Judging their inner feelings, Govind said to them, "When Guru Nanak put the Sikhs to test, it was only Guru Angad who came out successful. But it is a matter of deep satisfaction to me that now, instead of one, five have emerged in glory. I am convinced that henceforth the Sikhs will neither fail nor falter in doing their duty and sacrificing their all for the oppressed and the fallen and that they will maintain their honour, however hard the odds, however harsh the trials".

"Those who, considering me mad, had left the gathering, are cowardly and selfish. Those who stayed but did not offer their heads, shall find acceptance, but these five, who offered me their all, are the very image of me. They are dear to me above everything else. They are the Beloved of God !"

"But, pray, grieve no more. By and by I shall need your heads too. But your turn is not yet !"

Govind had a dual purpose in enacting this strange scene.

Firstly, he wanted to know if the Sikhs had imbibed the lesson of unquestioning obedience.

Secondly, he wanted to impress upon his followers that the path by which he wished to lead them was the thorny path of honour and sacrifice !

It was Baisakhi the next day. The Guru came into the Durbar robed in spotless white. He said to the audience, "The drinking of charan pahul has thus far been the main ceremony of initiation. It symbolised humility and self-denial. But times have changed now. Courage and valour are the need of the hour. Henceforth pahul of khanda (two-edged sword) shall be administered for baptism. It shall instil courage and defiance of death in the baptized. Every Sikh shall add the suffix. "Singh", meaning the lion, to his name. It will transform him into a veritable lion in courage and bravery. All persons, of whatever caste or creed, shall be welcome into this great fellowship of the selfless brave."

Then he bade the five "Beloved Ones" stand before him with folded hands. He had fresh water brought to him in an iron vessel and, with the rhythm of the khanda turning round and round into the water, he sang the soul-uplifting songs of the Gurus.

Then he made the five Beloved Ones drink the 'amrit', the water thus consecrated, and said, "Now indeed you are singhs (lions) ! It shall be your duty to destroy the oppressor and help the oppressed and the down-trodden ! Honest labour, giving away one-tenth of your income to the poor, and offering food to the needy shall be the hall marks of your conduct in life. You are not to be slaves to habit or tradition. You are to uphold freedom in thought and action. Avoid intoxicants as gall. You are to keep five ks'—Kesh (hair), Kangha (comb), Kara (iron bangle), Kirpan (sword) and Kachhehra (shorts).

Finally he directed the .five Beloved Ones to prepare amrit for him 'also. He was baptised by them now as he had baptized them before. Thereafter twentyfive thousand Sikhs present there were baptized. This abolished all distinctions of caste and creed from amongst the baptised and they entered as equals into the glorious fellowship of the Khalsa.

The addition of the suffix 'Singh' to the names of the newly-baptized had a tremendous psychological impact, especially on persons belonging to the lowest social station. Fear and cowardice vanished from their midst like night before the rising dawn.

The ancient Rishis wore long hair. The piety of Rishis entered into the life of the baptised. The difference in outer form compelled them to be different from others in deeds also.

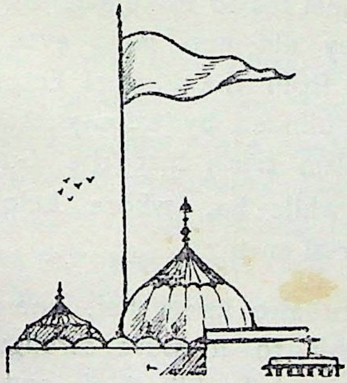
To keep the hair clean, it is necessary to keep a comb.

The Guru extolled the kirpan or the sword as the noblest of weapons because it is a defender of the weak and terror for the tyrant.

The Guru replaced the loin-cloth used by the Hindus with Kachhehra or shorts, for it was a befitting dress for the martial life for which the Guru had prepared the Sikhs.

Kara or the iron bangle is meant as a perpetual reminder to its wearer to refrain from evil, both in thought and action.

The rivers, when they meet the sea, lose themselves in its vast immensity. Likewise persons belonging to different castes or creeds lose their identity when they enter into this wonderful fellowship of equals. Only on the foundations of equality and unity can a fellowship survive.



Battle of Anandpur

When the Brahmans saw that the Guru was bent upon destroying the traditional structure of Hinduism by levelling all high and low, they were greatly perturbed. They began to instigate the hill chiefs against the Guru. The Guru had already been a thorn in their side. Now they made up their mind to make one final bid to call a halt to the Guru's designs. They did not mind even if it meant inviting help from the Mughal Emperor. They were so much blinded by jealousy that they failed to see the plain truth that the Guru was their true friend, while he, whose help they sought, was their mortal enemy.

The Guru also knew that, one day or other, he would have to measure strength with the combined forces of the hill chiefs and the Mughals for, while the former decried the reformist zeal of the Guru, the latter considered him a challenge to their supremacy in Northern India.

The Guru began to prepare himself with characteristic thoroughness for this impending trial of strength.

The hill chiefs, smarting under their recent defeat, were always on the look out for a chance to wreak their vengeance on the Guru. Once, when the latter was out a-hunting, some of the hill men lay in ambush to make short work of the hunting party by sheer weight of numbers. But they were soon disillusioned. The hirelings, however superior in numbers, can never be a match for persons inspired with a cause. The Sikhs fell upon the attackers with the fury of a lion at bay and cut the enemy vanguard to pieces. One of the chiefs was killed and another lost his arm. Unable at last to withstand the mounting fury of the Sikh onslaught, the hill men retreated, leaving behind hundreds of their dead on the field.

The hill chiefs were staggered, confounded. They could not understand how the miscellaneous rabble collected by the Guru could defeat their trained and well-equipped army. This defeat further strengthened them in their belief that as long as the Guru was not ousted from their territory, they could never hope to breathe secure. They decided, therefore, to avail themselves of the good offices of the Sarhind Governor to invoke Aurangzeb for help.

They made out a long case against the Guru. They called him a traitor and enemy of the Empire. They pleaded for hasty despatch of Imperial forces to crush their common foe. They went even so far as to express their readiness to foot the bill of the entire Imperial expedition.

The Governor of Sarhind, an avowed enemy of the Sikhs, lost no time in forwarding this request to the Emperor. Soon under the joint command of Dina Beg and Painde Khan a powerful army was heading for Anandpur to join the equally powerful force of the hill chiefs. Against this formidable foe the Sikhs could hardly muster a few thousand men.

As soon as the allied forces neared Anandpur, the Guru, after prayers to the Supreme Being for help, ordered his men for general assault and the battle commenced in right earnest. The Sikhs fell upon the enemy like a lion on a herd of sheep.

On one side the deadly arrows of the Guru, and on the other the fury of the Sikh attack, created such confusion in the enemy ranks as made it realize that numbers did not always count.

To cheer the fainting hopes of his men, the Mughal general, Painde Khan, advanced and challenged the Guru to a single combat, shouting, "Why cause unnecessary bloodshed ! Let the issue be decided between us two. Come, strike first !"

The Guru replied, "You are the aggressors, not we. We never fight but in self-defence. Since you are the aggressor, let the first blow be yours !"

At this Painde Khan, taking aim, shot his powerful shaft at the Guru. But it went off the mark and the Guru said, "Never mind ! Try another !"

Painde Khan sent another shaft, but now with lesser confidence. It but lightly grazed the Guru's shield and slid past. Seeing the debacle thus caused, Painde Khan turned to flee. But the Guru would not let him go. He said, "Do not act the coward now, general ! It is not fair to deny me my turn when you have had yours."

Saying this, the Guru, with his long, puissant arms, let loose a shaft at the general which pierced his skull through and he fell from his horse, a lifeless heap, in the dust of the field.

The death of Painde Khan raised the courage of the Sikhs and they fell upon the enemy with added fury. The enemy could no longer stand the spirited attacks of the Sikhs. It decided to retreat. The Sikhs pursued the fleeing enemy as far as Ropar and cut its rear to pieces.

The news of this humiliating defeat suffered by the combined forces of the Mughals and the hill chiefs spread apace and the Sikh soldiers from far and near began to flock to Anandpur to join the Guru's army. The Guru knew that the wily hill chiefs would not desist from mean tricks. So he applied himself with greater energy to the task of strengthening his army.

The hill chiefs now wrote another letter to the Emperor, repeating their false allegations against the Guru. They wrote: "If we do not end him now, then he would certainly end us one day! The Guru is a sworn enemy of both the Hindu and Muslim faiths. He is out to destroy us root and branch. Alone we are helpless against him! Only a powerful Imperial force can end this menace once for all!"

This argument had the desired effect. Aurangzeb immediately despatched a powerful detachment of battle-tried soldiers, provisioned for a long siege, under the command of Sayyad Khan. At this time the Guru had only five hundred soldiers with him. But they fought so spiritedly that Sayyad Khan was won over by their dauntless courage and iron will. He fell at the Guru's feet and retired from the scene of battle. His command was taken over by Ramzan Khan.

In the darkness of night, when all was quiet and still, a mobile band of Sikh soldiers, under the leadership of Prince Ajit Singh, the Guru's eldest son, pounced upon the surprised enemy.

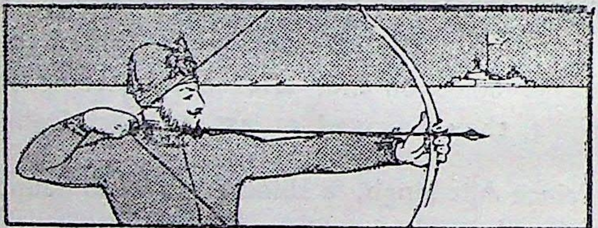
A swift but sharp action ensued. As the day dawned, nothing was seen of the enemy but its countless dead scattered round its empty camp.

On learning about the debacle, Aurangzeb was furious. But crafty as he was, he betrayed no outward emotion. He now decided to achieve by guile what he had failed to do by force. He decided to invite the Guru to the Imperial court and then to imprison him. So, in glib and flattering terms, he accosted the Guru thus : "I shall feel honoured if you visit my court. I shall treat you as a king ought to treat a man of God. If you reject this invitation, you will incur my displeasure !"

The Guru replied to him with characteristic frankness, "I stand for the free way of life. I cannot be friends with you so long as you play the tyrant and are unjust to the people whose creed is different from yours."

Aurangzeb was not accustomed to such replies, and he definitely did not relish this one. To teach the Guru a lesson, he decided to give personal attention to the matter. He once again mustered a force even larger than before and sent it against the Guru. The provincial forces of Sirhind and Lahore and those of the hill men swelled the Imperial hordes. This huge force soon besieged Anandpur. The Sikhs once again fought with unparalleled dash. Their resistance belied the enemy's hopes of an now to no more than forty. They all now directed their weary march to Chamkaur.

When the Guru reached Ropar, a rumour was afoot that another enemy column was heading that way, intent upon capturing him alive. With his ranks sorely depleted, but his courage undiminished, he proceeded on. As a precautionary measure, he left behind some of his men under the leadership of one, Ude Singh, to hold the enemy advance till he was securely entrenched at a place suitably situated for the last ditch fight.



Battle of Chamkaur

Reaching Chamkaur, the Guru occupied the farm-house of a Jat, situated on an eminence that dominated the surrounding scene. It was built in the shape of a fortress. Two soldiers took positions at the two gates, thirty on the ramparts and Govind, with his two sons and two soldiers, posted himself in the turret above.

The Imperial forces, in their final bid to capture the Guru and his men, did not relax in their pursuit of him. They soon surrounded the fortress and commenced the assault. The assaulting force was cut to pieces in a fierce counter attack. Seeing this, the three field commanders of the Mughal army, Nahar Khan, Ghani Khan and Khwaja Mardood, advanced at the head of a powerful detachment. The first two were immediately despatched by the Guru's unfailing arrows. The third would have followed suit had he not escaped by taking shelter behind a wall.

To make short work of this fierce resistance, the enemy decided to break open the main gate; but the Sikhs fought with so grim a resolution that the enemy dared not come too near.

Prince Ajit Singh, hardly seventeen, asked his father's permission to lead an attack on the enemy. The Guru knew that the odds were too heavy against this stripling of a lad. But he wanted to set traditions of manliness and courage, and his heart was glad at the request. The Guru armed him with fatherly care and affection and sent him to the battle with his blessings.

Ajit Singh rode into the thick of the field on his prancing stallion and, after giving the enemy a gallant fight, he fell.

Jujhar Singh, the Guru's second son, a boy of thirteen, saw his brother ride gloriously to death; and his envy was roused. The young lad approached the Guru for permission to follow his brother's lead. The Guru granted it gladly. Every one, friend or foe, was amazed to see his noble form, fearless of death, riding alone to the battle. He fell upon the enemy with the spirit of his dauntless brother and died fighting valiantly like him.

The Guru was watching the noble conduct of his brave sons from the turret and, after his second son fell fighting in the great traditions he had set, in all humility and thankfulness he prayed to the Almighty, "With Thy grace, O Lord, these young ones have acquitted themselves as well as they could. They have come back to Thee after their brief earthly sojourn. Give them shelter near Thy lotus-feet."

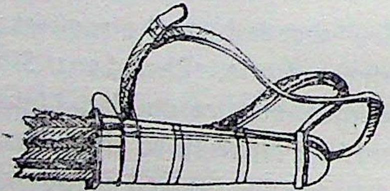
By now it was dark and the fighting ceased for the day. The few Sikhs, who survived, apprehending that the Guru, true to his declared views, might choose to die fighting in the next day's battle, held a separate meeting. They decided to dissuade the Guru from taking this extreme course. They approached him with folded hands and ardently prayed, "Master, further resistance is out of question. We beg of you to leave the fortress before the tomorrow's sun rises. It was your inspiring word that thrilled us in perils and steeled us into defying dangers. You alone are our ultimate shelter and solace. Without you the great Sikh Panth you have created would be widowed and leaderless. If you are no more, who would be there to guide us through the perils that surround us. We beseech you not to disappoint us !"

The Guru acceded to the request so lovingly made. He dressed one, Bhai Sant Singh, who in form and demeanour resembled him, in his own style and, bidding farewell to the Sikhs, sallied out into the dark. Having passed through the forward enemy lines unnoticed, he proclaimed in a loud voice, "Gobind is leaving the fortress. Catch him if you will !"

The challenging voice of the Guru, which rang clear in the stillness of night, was a signal for chaos and confusion in the enemy ranks. Owing to dark, it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe. In its nervous hurry to prevent the Guru's escape, the enemy attacked right and left cutting one another to pieces.

Next morning the few Sikhs, who had remained behind, sallied out of the fortress one by one, and after giving the enemy a hard time, fell gloriously fighting in the field of battle.

When the Mughal commanders entered the fortress, they were extremely disappointed to find that the Guru had again given them a slip. They hurriedly abondoned the siege and scattered in small bands to comb the surrounding countryside in order to capture the Guru before he was out of reach.



In Malwa

After trudging many a weary mile in the darkness of a chill December night, the Guru, at last, reached the dense forests of Machhiwara. He munched the leaves of a wild shrub and quenched his thirst with water from a well nearby. Then he lay down in a secure place with the drawn sword firmly grasped in hand to fight if the pursuers overtook him.

With the break of dawn the three Sikhs, who had followed him from Chamkaur but had had strayed away in the dark, joined him. After days of incessant strain, the Guru felt too feeble to walk. One of the Sikhs carried him on his back to the well where he washed himself and partook of the food procured for him from a neighbouring village. Soon he was fresh and strong again.

Here he met two Pathan horse-dealers, Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan, with whom he had friendly dealings in the past. They adored him almost as a divine. A few scattered enemy columns were still pursuing the Guru. In order to hoodwink them the Guru donned the blue robes of the Muslim fakirs and posed as the Pir of Uch, a place near Multan. He was carried in a litter to Sirsa by his Pathan devotees.

Here he learnt that his two younger sons had been walled alive and done to death for refusing to embrace Islam and that his mother, unable to bear this shock, had fainted to death. As the messenger was relating to the Guru these heart-breaking news, the latter was unconsciously uprooting a thorny shrub with the point of his arrow. When the narration was over, the Guru said, "My sons are not dead. They have shown us the path to immortal life. It is the tyrants who shall die in ignominy and shame and be uprooted even as this shrub is."

From here the Guru moved on to Dina. The Sikhs of the surrounding area crowded round him amidst memorable scenes of joy and devotion. The Guru seems to have stayed at Dina for some considerable time, for here he wrote to the Emperor his famous epistle in Persian verse, known as Zafar Nama. Therein the Guru castigated the Emperor for his perjury and told him frankly that, by his narrow-mindedness and oppression, he was, in fact, digging the grave of the magnificent empire built with the wisdom of his great predecessors.

When the letter was delivered to Aurangzeb, he was at Ahmednagar, in the South. He was visibly moved by the justness of the Guru's rebuke and was stricken with remorse. He died soon after.

The sudden passing away of Aurangzeb ushered in a new era of happy relationship between the Guru and the Imperial government. Bhai Nandlal, a court poet of the Guru, who was a friend of the new Emperor, Bahadur Shah, played a major role in this rapprochement.

At Mukatsar

When the Sikhs, who had deserted the Guru at Anandpur, reached their native place in Majha, they were assailed by their womenfolk for their cowardly betrayal of the Guru. They were threatened with excommunication and social boycott by their kith and kin. The deserters now realised that it had been far better to have died for the Guru than to continue their days in everlasting shame and sorrow.

So, under the leadership of a brave woman, named Mai Bhago, they returned to patch up with the Guru and wash away this ignoble blot of betrayal.

By now the Guru had reached the sandy wastes of Khidrana, near Bhatinda. The Imperial army was still at his heels. The forty deserters intercepted the enemy near an ancient pond of water and fought so well that the enemy advance was halted. It was the hottest part of the year and water in those parts was scarce. Thirst and heat and, above all, the fanatic resistance offered by these forty Sikhs, afflicted the enemy so much that it decided to retreat before it was utterly overwhelmed.

The Guru marvelled to learn about the wonderful deeds of these heroes. He personally visited the scene of battle and, taking the head of each martyr in his lap, wiped the dust off his face and caressed him most lovingly. One of the forty, Mahan Singh by name, was fatally wounded, but not yet dead. He opened his eyes at the loving touch of his beloved Guru and his heart was divinely glad. The Guru said to him, "I am pleased with you all at the wonderful account you have given of your valour. Is there anything you desire of me?"

Mahan Singh faintly replied with folded hands, "If you are really pleased, O Lord, then tear up the document of sin and shame whereby we disowned you!"

The Guru's heart was moved. Silently he took out the paper and tore it to pieces. Mahan Singh thanked the Guru and then died with his heart at peace. The Guru named this place Mukatsar or the Tank of Salvation and styled the heroes as the Forty Immortals.

He next moved on to Damdama Sahib where he dictated the Holy Granth to Bhai Mani Singh.

The Guru had set great traditions before the Sikhs — traditions of love, service and sacrifice. He had made them fearless and versed in the art of self-defence. He had built the structure of their faith on justice, equality and democracy. In short, he had given them his all. Now he desired that they should not lean on him any more but stand on their own feet. So he decided to retire from the scene and move towards the Deccan.

In the Deccan

On his way to the Deccan the news of Aurangzeb's death reached him. It was a signal for the deceased Emperor's sons to fight out the issue of succession. Bahadur Shah, the eldest of them, sought the Guru's help in this hour of trial, which the latter freely rendered. Bahadur Shah was grateful to him for this timely assistance. He was now preparing an expedition to crush the revolt of his brother Kam Bakhsh. He requested the Guru to join him in this expedition. This was an additional reason why the Guru chose to move down to the South.

During the course of this expedition he reached Nader. Here at last he met the person whom he was ardently seeking. It was Lachhman Das, a Bairagi sadhu, who lived with his disciples in his hermitage on the banks of the Godavri. He had acquired certain occult powers which he used in tormenting the visiting travellers. It provided him with feline amusement. The Guru had heard of him and he desired to divert his misguided genius to a noble cause.

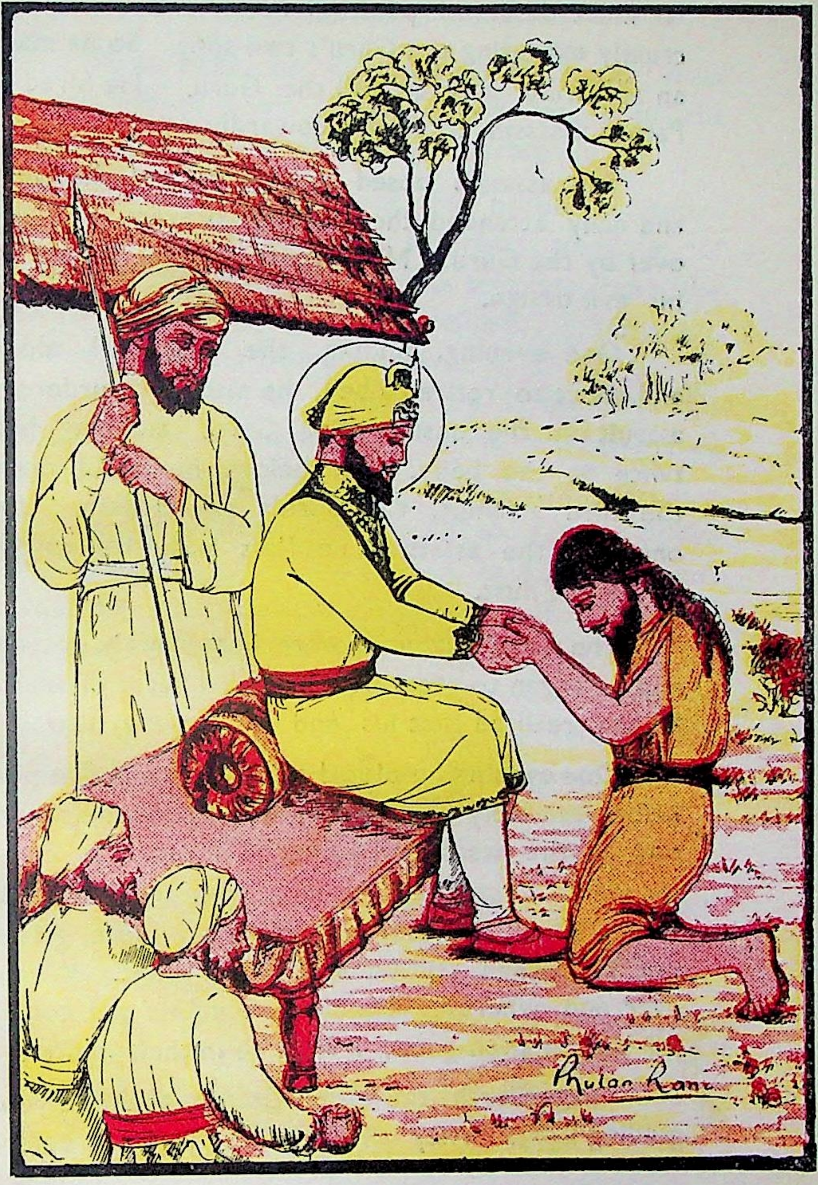
Lachhman Das tried to use his occult powers to make fun of the Guru also but to no avail. He had, at last, met his superior in the Guru and his pride was humbled. He fell at the Guru's feet, saying, "I am your Banda (bondslave), my Lord! Pray, forgive my sins!"

The Guru baptized him and named him Gurbakhsh Singh, but he continued to be popularly known as Banda Bahadur. He developed a deep affection for the Guru and asked the latter one day if there was any service he could do him,

The Guru apprised him of the merciless murder of his infant sons and enjoined on him to mete out examplary punishment to the evil-doers. He gave him a letter of authority in the name of Sikhs in the Punjab, telling them to gather under his banner to crush the tyrants.

Banda carried out this assignment with a crusading zeal and no evil-doer escaped the wide sweep of his invincible sword.

With Bahadur Shah's rise to power, Wajid Khan, the Governor of Sirhind, was increasingly alarmed about his own safety. He feared that the



Meeting with Banda

new Emperor might hand him over to the Guru to meet deserved punishment for shamelessly and cruelly executing the Guru's two sons. So he made an elaborate plot to kill the Guru. He hired a Pathan assassin to do this cowardly deed.

The assassin posed as a devotee of the Guru and daily attended the evening prayers presided over by the Guru. No one, of course, suspected his evil design.

One evening, finding the Guru all alone and about to retire to bed, he made a murderous assault on the unsuspecting Guru, stabbing him twice in the belly. But before he could make the third attempt, the Guru's sword flashed for once and the assassin's headless body lay rolling in the vile dust.

The Guru's wounds were immediately dressed and he began to recover. Yet in his heart of hearts he had realised that his end was drawing near.

One evening he placed a cocoanut and five pice before the Holy Granth and, bowing low before it, said to the assembled Sikhs, "The time has come for me to depart and be one with the Timeless One. When this mortal frame is no more, grieve not, for I shall still be with you in spirit. Whenever and wherever five Sikhs assemble and confer for the common good, I shall be in their midst.

"Henceforth the Holy Granth shall be your guiding light. They shall be dear to me before all others who follow the canons of the Sikh faith and uphold them in the face of odds."

Soon after, on October 7, 1708, the great Guru passed away, leaving behind trails of the golden track that leads on into eternity.

The glorious figure of this prophetic genius, sustained solely by his inherent grandeur of character, and supported by the absolute conviction of his calling, stands like a colossus, sublime and alone, across the fading centuries.

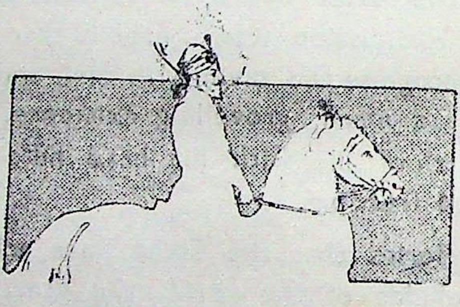
The mission for which Guru Nanak, the first of the Gurus, came into the world, was completed by Guru Gobind Singh.

It was not his aim to build an empire or to win transient glory for himself or his people, but to make the latter live a life of self-respect and honour. His mission was to enable man to know himself, recognise the divinity in him, and, instead of plying a mean, grovelling existence, to walk on the path of life with his head held high, in dignity and freedom.

The glories that the Sikhs have achieved on the battlefields of the world, the great sacrifices they have made in the national struggle for freedom and the name they have won in the fields of sports and adventure, all reflect the splendour of the great and magnificent Guru who sacrificed his all—his father, his sons, his loving wives, his personal comforts—that the Sikhs, and through them the lofty ideals that he held dear, may shine through ages.

Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa,
Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh.

[To God the Khalsa, To God the Victory]



Appendix I

Eternal Warriors

During his wanderings in Malwa, Guru Gobind Singh met a tribal chief named Dalla. The incident described in this poem reflects the height of devotion the Sikh warriors had for their Master.

Far from the tents that decked the distant plains,
Where his war-weary Sikhs relaxed their veins,
Once sat Govinda, king of men, deep lost
In lingering thoughts of his exploits past
When Dalla, chieftain of a warlike race,
With pomp attended came, and haughty grace,
And bowing low his proud and crested head,
In reverence deep he to Govinda said ;
"Great Sire, with wonder have I watched your fight
For justice' sake against oppressor's might
And heard your great and soul-inspiring word

When hope had sunken dim and danger loured ;
But if — forgive me for it — you had sought
My aid in all your righteous battles fought,
Swift victories had kissed your laurelled brow
To your ignoble foes' eternal woe ;
For, Sire, my soldiers are in battle tried,
Brave, restive, foe-compelling, fiery-eyed,
Who smile e'en in th' face of fiercest odds
And hurl defiance at the mighty gods."
At this vain boast Govinda sweetly smiled
E'en as a father on a vaunting child ;
But ere he could refute the chieftain's claim,
From far-off Kabul's misty mountains came
One of Govinda's true disciples old
With such a gift as oft the king extolled
And honoured most — a gun superbly fine ;
And pleased was king Govinda's heart divine :
And lifting up the gun in warrior's pride,
Said he, "Bring me one of your soldier's tried,
O Dalla, for the target, since I mean
E'en now to test th' aim of this weapon keen !"
This unexpected queer demand perplexed
The chieftain and he answered inly vexed :
"How can my soldiers choose such death to die ;
Where's th' battlefield and where the enemy ?"
Laughed king Govinda at this vain reply.
"Are these the men who would great gods defy ?"
Said he : "Are these the soldiers who would aid
Me in my battles, or some hirelings paid ?
Now, Dalla, look at men that fought for me,
The matchless warriors of eternity,

Men who would dare e'en death and fate and chance
At bidding of their general's word, 'Advance !' "
So saying, great Govinda, king divine,
His new-arrived disciple bade benign
This message near the distant camp proclaim :
"King needs a soldier for his weapon's aim !"
And as the herald's word abruptly rent
The twilight silence round the foremost tent,
Two men who heard their general's great behest,
The one unshod, the other half-undrest,
Came rushing headlong like the onward tide
Where stood Govinda 'cross the wasteland wide,
Calm and majestic, with the threatening gun,
While Dalla shrunk amazed seeing the one
In desperate speed the other soldier vie ;
"Me first !" the one ; "No, me !" the other cry.

Appendix II

Sikh Gurus

Guru Nanak (1469-1539)

He was the founder of Sikh faith. Accompanied by a Mohammedan rebeck player, named Mardana, he widely travelled on foot through India, Ceylon, South China, Afghanistan, Iran, Arabia and Sudan. He debunked hypocrisy and empty rituals. He preached oneness of God, love, and equality and stressed the dignity of honest labour.

He had two sons, Sri Chand and Lakshmi Chand. He conferred Gurudom on Bhai Lehna, later known as Guru Angad.

Guru Angad (1504-1552)

He was a rich merchant and devotee of goddess Durga. He met Nanak and was immediately converted to his creed. He invented Gurmukhi script. His songs of devotion give a lucid exposition of the Sikh way of life. Like his predecessors he did not deem his sons, Datu and Dasu, fit for succession. So he conferred Gurudom on Amardas.

Guru Amardas (1479-1574)

He was a great seeker of truth. In his old age a chance hearing of Nanak's songs, sung by his daughter-in-law, brought peace to his restless mind. Soon after, he was introduced to Guru Angad, whom he served with complete self-surrender. His songs preach self-denial and humility as means to a happy and enlightened life. He conferred Gurudom on his son-in-law, the handsome Bhai Jetha, later known as Ramdas.

Guru Ramdas (1534-1581)

He was the very incarnation of love and perfect understanding. His soul-dissolving lyrics transport one to the heights of devotional fervour. He built the world-famous Golden Temple, the Holy of Holies of the Sikh faith. He had its foundations laid by a celebrated Muslim divine, Mian Mir. Considering his scheming eldest son, Prithi Chand, unfit for Gurudom, he installed his younger son, Arjan Dev, on the gaddi.

Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606)

He compiled the songs of his predecessors and other Hindu and Muslim saints in a book form. This book is called the Holy Granth and is the Bible of the Sikh faith. Next to Nanak's, his own great lyrics form a substantial part of it. The Sukhmani or the Song of Peace is his single greatest composition. He made music an essential accompaniment of holy recitations. He suffered martyrdom at the hands of the rulers in order to uphold human dignity.

Guru Hargobind (1595-1644)

He was the only son of Guru Arjan Dev. Piqued at his father's martyrdom at the hands of an oppressive government, he assumed spiritual as well as temporal leadership of the Sikhs. He organised his followers into a compact military body and won

(lines 8 to 10 above refer to Guru Arjan Dev) several decisive victories against the Imperial forces. He had four sons—Gurditta, Dhirmal, Tegh Bahadur and Attal Rai. He conferred Gurudom on Har Rai, the son of Gurditta.

Guru Har Rai (1630-1661)

He was the very image of love and kindness. He had so deep a reverence for the Holy Word that he banished his elder son, Ram Rai, for distorting, against his better knowledge, the word of Nanak to gain the Emperor's good graces.

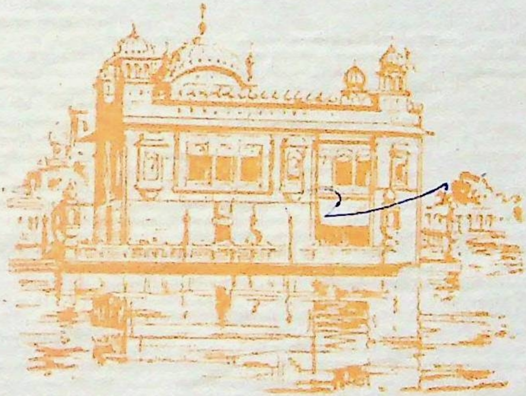
He installed his younger son, Har Krishan, on the Gur-gaddi.

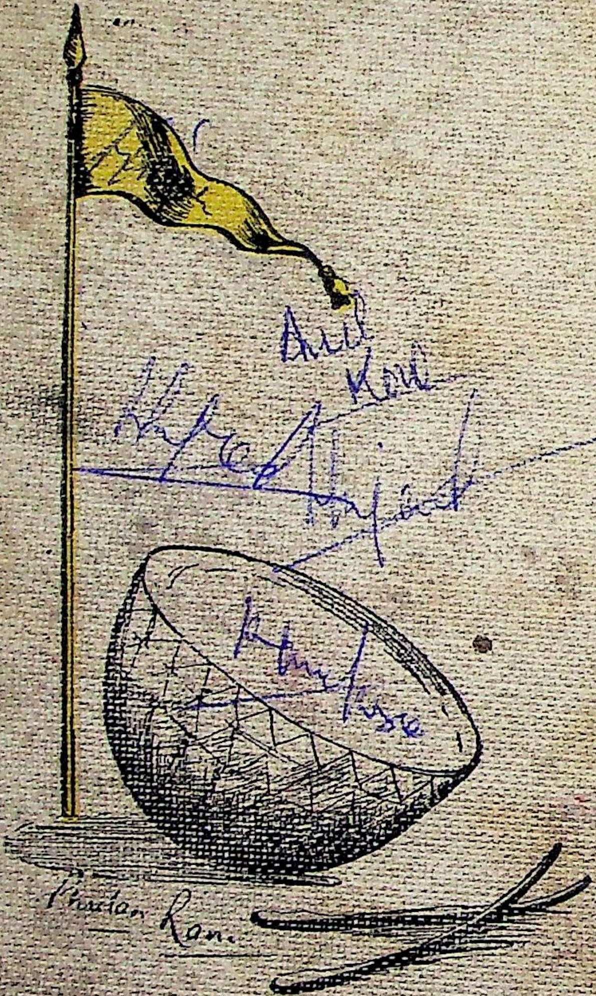
Guru Har Krishan (1656-1664)

His pontificate was cut short by early death, only three years after his installation. Before death he ordained the Sikhs to find their next spiritual guide in Teg Bahadur, a son of the sixth Guru, Hargobind, who lived at Baba Bakala, in Amritsar district, in the seclusion of a subterranean cellar.

Guru Teg Bahadur (1621-1675)

In his youth he accompanied his redoubtable father in his campaigns against the Imperial forces and his great exploits on the field of battle won him the name "Teg Bahadur"—the swordsman par excellence. But the transience of life and its vanity soon turned his thoughts inwards and he spent his days in the calm contemplation of Reality, till he was forced out of his self-imposed obscurity on his appointment as Guru Har Krishan's successor.





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